

unions can be worse off than labor in no unions at all. Furthermore, Mr. O'Connor sets up fascism as steel's only answer to depression. But general recovery—and particularly recovery in the automobile business—has so stimulated steel orders that the steel industry will undoubtedly show a profit for the present year without having made any notable recent advances in the fascistic direction.

Everyone who can endure Mr. O'Connor's prose (which would flunk any freshman) ought to read his book for the sake of the material collected in it. But they ought to read also one of the equally superficial knee-bending studies of industry of the kind that flourished in pre-depression times. Of the two, Mr. O'Connor has the more social attitude and his conclusions are somewhat less misleading. But his book is so much a journalistic compilation, so little a judicial inquiry, that its significance is sadly impaired. It is full of wired sound and second-hand fury.

E. D. Kennedy is an associate editor of Fortune.

Cyclone in the Pacific

VICTORIOUS TROY, or THE HURRYING ANGEL. By John Masefield. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS is not one of the Poet Laureate's books about Troy; it is one of his books about ships. Troy, the luxurious, half-Oriental city of polygamous robber-barons, like that other Oriental city Carthage, had one great virtue worth to the world's imagination all the rest; she was conquered. And so, to Mr. Masefield as to many other generous hearts, Troy has become a symbol of the under-dog, the weaker side, and he has put her name to this story in which the weaker side wins; for this is simply the story of how a ship was brought through a storm.

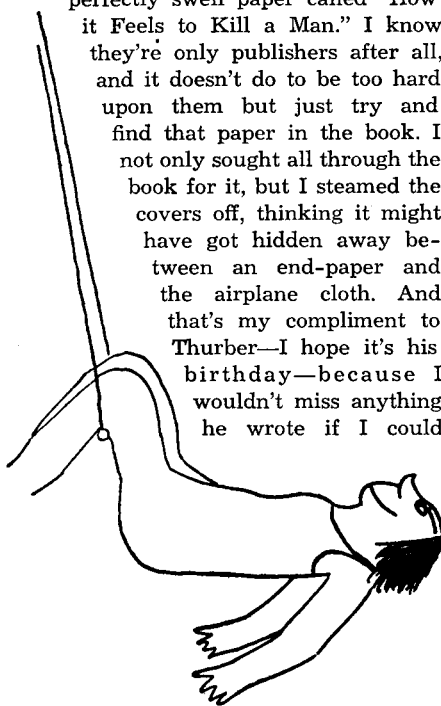
It is one of Mr. Masefield's best sea stories. The appalling confusion of a ship at sea has never been better conveyed. It steers between the preoccupation with ill-luck and defeat which in "Sard Harker" made one feel that the cards were almost ludicrously stacked, and the over-easy success of "The Taking of the Gry." And it brings one of the greatest gifts that books can give, an imaginative enlargement of one's experience, as close as possible to undergoing the thing itself. The only books that can add to one's life in that way are those whose authors have, like Mr. Masefield, the rare combination of first-hand knowledge of some field, and the literary skill to convey it. Here are both; and when you have read this, you will know, better than any one who has not been there, what it is like to be in a dismayed ship in a storm in the South Pacific.

With the Greatest of Ease!

THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE. By James Thurber. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THERE are two mistakes in Thurber's latest. The first and worst is a mistake by the publishers. But then publishers seldom read the books they publish. If they really know what's in them it's quite by accident. On the jacket-flap, and in their advertising of the book, they keep genially referring to a perfectly swell paper called "How it Feels to Kill a Man." I know they're only publishers after all, and it doesn't do to be too hard upon them but just try and find that paper in the book. I not only sought all through the book for it, but I steamed the covers off, thinking it might have got hidden away between an end-paper and the airplane cloth. And that's my compliment to Thurber—I hope it's his birthday—because I wouldn't miss anything he wrote if I could



DRAWINGS BY JAMES THURBER
From "The Middle-Aged Man on the Flying Trapeze."

possibly help it. I asked the black cat on page 97, as she looked like the Witch of Endor. I asked the three veiled ladies on page 90. I thought I discovered the gent on page 60 putting it away in the trunk on the back of a Poindexter. Nope. Now you try and find it. It makes a good game for a rainy day.

The second mistake is Mr. Thurber's. When they put up the monument to Smurch the round-the-world flier, surely they wouldn't have carved on its base a tiny bi-plane, as Thurber has drawn it. He distinctly says Smurch flew "a second-hand, single-motored Brethren Dragon-Fly III monoplane." It took me a long time to get over this mistake. I kept rushing up and down the room, barking at intervals.

Most of the people who haw-haw at Thurber will be puzzled by parts of this book. What should they make, for instance, of "The Man on the Train" or "One Is a Wanderer"? They will enjoy

"The Funniest Man You Ever Saw," because that is precisely their idea of humor, but the peculiar atmospheric effect of "The Black Magic of Barney Heller" will doubtless escape them. I think on the whole Mr. Thurber writes best when the story springs out of his recollection of his early days or present personal experience. "Snapshot of a Dog" is one of the best things ever written of a dog. "A Portrait of Aunt Ida" and "The Luck of Jad Peters" are rich and rare. Thurber's wholly imaginary stories are always funny and well-turned, but they're apt to be thin. His parodies are pretty good, but that's all. But when he wants to be excoriating (in a nice way) he can certainly kid the pants off his subject. Take "Something to Say," the portrait of one of those infernal pests posing as geniuses with one or two of whom every person who has ever worked in editorial offices or the publishing business is only too familiar. That paper did my soul good; for I am a darkly-muttering angry man. Thurber's Art? What shall I say. It swings between inadequacy and positive inspiration. And now he likes to draw snow falling. He's gone slightly dotty about drawing snow falling. And the little group, at the end of the Table of Contents, of the tiny man escaping from the huge women—genius, my friends, sheer genius.

P.S. I know where that missing paper is now. It's in the box at the end of the book—page 227—and the bloodhound is sniffing at the box. Or is it a beagle? Or is it a basset-hound?

Write Your Own Ticket Last Reminder

This is our last possible chance to remind you to vote on the Best and Worst Novel, Biography, etc., of the year. The ballot blanks were printed in *The Saturday Review* of November 2. All returns must be in next week. The results will be printed in the Christmas issue, December 7. If you have not yet sent in your ballot, please do so at once. Write your own ticket, and mail it to The Managing Editor, *Saturday Review*, 25 W. 45 St., New York City.

Short Stories, 1935

THE BEST SHORT STORIES 1935 and the Yearbook of the American Short Story. Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1935. \$2.50.

THESE STORIES WENT TO MARKET. By Vernon McKenzie. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1935. \$2.

O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD PRIZE STORIES OF 1935. Edited by Harry Hansen. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALFRED DASHIELL

THE first two of these books illustrate two contrasting currents in the American short story. Mr. O'Brien picks "stories which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form." Dean McKenzie teaches short story writing as a trade. Mr. O'Brien's selections are taken largely from the "little magazines," and his standard may be said to be anti-commercial as well as non-commercial. Dean McKenzie regards a short story as successful if it sells. The stories in his book are "first" stories which have achieved publication in magazines ranging from *Topnotch* to the *Saturday Evening Post*, written by his pupils at the University of Washington. Mr. O'Brien takes three stories from *Scribner's Magazine*, two from the *Atlantic*, and one each from *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and the *American Mercury*. The remaining nineteen stories come from the little magazines (if we include the somewhat anomalous *Story* in that group).

"The Best Short Stories 1935" (which really covers the calendar year 1934) is Mr. O'Brien's twenty-first annual selection. It is especially significant in that it marks a new note in Mr. O'Brien's thinking. Since the early 1920's he has annually registered his protest against the commercialized short story with its hackneyed pattern and its lack of relation to life. He has with great energy encouraged the "little magazines" and the writers of the left. This year he calls a halt. He suggests a moratorium for two years on new little magazines and points out the sterilizing effect on the tendency to legislate politically on the writer's subject matter. This tendency which he designates as fascist is evident especially in left-wing circles. "The revolution in the American short story," then, has gone beyond the bounds envisioned by the leader. The dull realism of the little magazines proves as stultifying as the sugar-syrup of the mass-circulation periodicals. Mr. O'Brien's warning is salutary. One wishes

that it had been uttered sooner. One wonders also whether Mr. O'Brien's preoccupation with novelty and new writers does not still cause a lack of balance in his selections. Does he think that seventy per cent of all the best short stories appear in the little magazines?

Nevertheless, this year's volume is more readable than previous collections in the series and contains some of the most interesting and significant work of the year. The editor mentions especially among the new writers Allan Seager's "This Town and Salamanca" and the work of William Saroyan and Dorothy McCleary. Seager's story is excellent. That it contributes "a new dimension to American fiction" is open to question. Seager promises much, his output is as yet slim. Saroyan's story, "Resurrection of a Life," is one of his familiar meandering, egocentric reveries which has virtues and faults almost equally balanced. In contrast to Seager, Saroyan is too prolific. Unless he is to prove a literary comet, the tail of which is already disappearing in the West, he should write less and think more about what and how he is writing. Dorothy McCleary's story, "Sunday Morning," is informed with humor, warmth, and human sympathy.

Examples of the work of Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Morley Callaghan, Paul Horgan, Sara Haardt, and Nancy Hale, among the well-established, are included. Why the fantastic "Lo!" is chosen from the nine stories by Faulkner given three-star rating is incomprehensible. "The Sun and the Rain," by Thomas Wolfe, is an excellent choice, especially because it shows what the author can do in brief space.

Two of the most attractive stories in the book are the late Sara Haardt's "Little White Girl," dealing with a Southern child's introduction to racial division by sudden separation from her little Negro playmate, and "Suns That Our Hearts Harden," by Carlton Brown, a father-and-son story (of which there are three in the book).

Whit Burnett's twenty-thousand-word "Division" seems a good, if simple, idea developed to tedious length and taking up a disproportionate amount of space.

"The Party Next Door," by Ernest Brace, is one of the most firmly constructed and satisfying stories in the book. One notes that Mr. Brace had experience as editor of *Adventure* before he devoted

himself to editing the *Plowshare*. Contrasting his story with some of the futile arty efforts in the book, the value of a good course of sprouts in a tougher fiction school than that offered by the little magazines becomes apparent.

The stories in Dean McKenzie's book show some talent and much superficial cleverness. Here we have the opposite extreme but a somewhat similar effect. The teacher's rigorous insistence that stories must be written for the market may well

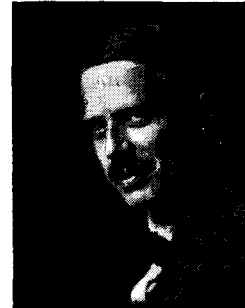
serve to stifle whatever talent there is. Several of the twelve stories are entertaining, most of them are time-killers. The best are "The Blind Commander," by Marion Thornton, "Home-Town Laughter," by John Reid Byers, and the cynical "Wedding Party," by Grace Gierin. Accompanying the stories are an introduction by Dean McKenzie and case histories of the origin, development, and sale of the stories themselves. It is a

good, practical volume for the beginning tradesmen of letters and will probably result in increased enrolment in Dean McKenzie's classes. If such things could be arranged, it might be well for some of Mr. O'Brien's protégés to go to school to Dean McKenzie for a semester, while some of the talented from the McKenzie seminar took a course under Mr. O'Brien.

The new O. Henry volume occupies solid ground between the two extremes. Mr. Hansen is not afraid of a pattern story and his choices come from the radical *Anvil* and the *American Magazine* as well. The judges, Tess Slesinger, Clifton Fadiman, and Joseph Henry Jackson, awarded first prize to Kay Boyle's "White Horses of Vienna" and second to "The Home Place" by Dorothy Thomas—both from *Harper's*. The short short story prize went to "John the Six" by Josephine Johnson, from the *Atlantic*.

No stories and only four writers appearing in the O'Brien book are included here. The authors who achieve the double distinction are Thomas Wolfe, William Saroyan, Louis Mamet, Dorothy McCleary. The two anthologies together present the work of forty-two writers, a sizeable delegation of America's best. Under Mr. Hansen's direction, the O. Henry collections have become less conventional. The O'Brien books, in a sense, have become hedged about by the cult of the new, and this year the O. Henry collection wins, on points. It has fewer statistics but is perhaps more significant. It is an excellent cross section of the good short story writers, representing achievement rather than promise. It is substantial and entertaining.

Alfred Dashiell is one of the editors of *Scribner's Magazine*. Recently he wrote a chapter on the contemporary short story for the revised edition of Henry S. Canby's "Study of the Short Story."



EDWARD J. O'BRIEN



HARRY HANSEN